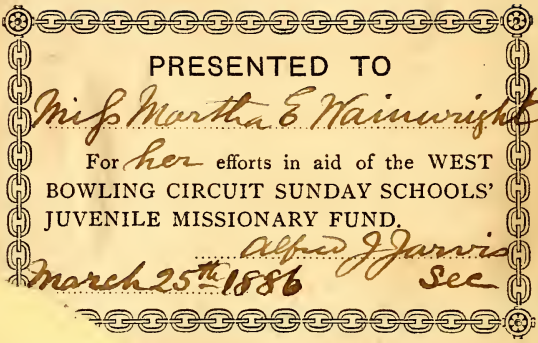
THE MOTHERLESS BAIRNS


PRESENTED TO
Miss Martha E Wainwright
For her efforts in aid of the WEST
BOWLING CIRCUIT SUNDAY SCHOOLS'
JUVENILE MISSIONARY FUND.
Alfred J Jarvis
March 25th 1886
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25

THE LITTLE ORPHANS DISCOVERED.

THE

MOTHERLESS BAIRNS,

AND

WHO SHELTERED THEM.

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:
56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD; AND
164, PICCADILLY.

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CHAPTER I.

"I was a Stranger, and ye took Me in."

It was a sharp, frosty night late in December, the wind driving the snow in unfriendly gusts into the faces of the passers-by, and compelling all who were not actually obliged to encounter its violence

to seek as speedily as possible the shelter of their own homes.

At the corner of a street leading out of one of the many crowded thoroughfares in the heart of the city, stood an old-fashioned crockery shop, from the inner parlour of which the cheerful glow of a coke fire, reflected on the window-panes, made the darkness without only seem more dreary and desolate. Unmindful of wind and snow, two little faces might have been seen closely pressed against the window, eagerly gazing on a sight which greeted their eyes through the glass door separating the shop from the room behind. The muslin blind, which usually hung before it to screen those within from the gaze of the outer world, had accidentally dropped, and left to view a cheerful group, consisting of father, mother, and several children, seated at their evening meal.

The kettle singing on the fire, the cat comfortably lying on the snug hearth, the

clean white cloth, with the neat cups and saucers, the home-made cake, and bread-and-butter, above all, the happy faces of the children, did not escape the eager notice of the poor little wanderers, whose own sad experience of life might have been summed up in the few short but expressive words—hungry and cold, motherless and homeless.

It was the old story, alas, only too common, of sin, suffering, and sorrow; the drunkard husband going away, and leaving the poor, worn-out, sorrow and care-stricken wife to die in a miserable garret, and the friendless little ones turned out alone on the world, which seemed to them so large and dreary. Sleeping now on a doorstep, now under one of the numerous railway arches, too often the only refuge of the homeless and destitute, in the daytime begging a few halfpence, or some scant crusts, growing every day more dirty and more forlorn; no wonder that the sight of

a home which seemed to them (unaccustomed to aught but want and woe) rich in all that could be desired, should arrest their eyes and make them gaze on wistfully, forgetful of wind and cold.

No such home had ever been for them; their earliest remembrances were of a dark, damp cellar, a cruel father, and a sorrowful and ailing mother; their latest of an old tumble-down garret, where that mother lay dying, without proper nourishment or kind, loving care—no voice to whisper to her of a Saviour's love, or to bear to her heart the glad tidings which could have shed a light over the dark valley. Mingled with these came the remembrances of the coarse tones of the rough woman, who, as soon as their mother was buried, had pushed them into the street, telling them to "be gone, and never to darken her doorway again, the good-for-nothing brats."

After gazing intently for some time at the happy scene before them, the elder

of the two children, by a sudden, irresistible impulse, at length darted up the steps, and softly turning the handle of the door, crept inside the shop, the younger one clinging to her sister's arm. Crouching down in a corner, where they hoped to escape observation, but with eyes and ears both on the alert, they bent forward to catch the sound of what was passing in the inner room. For a moment all seemed to be quiet, and then the father's voice was heard reading aloud. They saw the children seated round the table, the elder ones reading in turn, while the younger sat by, quietly listening. They could even distinguish some of the words, but, alas, they were no familiar tones which fell on the ears of the little beggar children; they heard something about a Father pitying His children, and, as the words were read, instinctively the younger child whispered, "That's not our father. Whose father can that be?"

"Hush!" softly said the elder one, "or they will hear us, and then we shall be turned out."

At that moment the outer door opened, and another customer coming in, Mr. Morley, the owner of the shop, stepped out from behind the glass door. It was only a message respecting some order which had been given earlier in the day; and no light being required, the trembling children remained in security in their hiding-place. At length, overcome by fatigue, cold, and hunger, they fell asleep in one another's arms, the younger child whispering, as she kissed her sister, "I wish, Polly, we might stay here every night, instead of sleeping out in the cold."

Poor little ones! Uncared for on earth, and deserted by the father who should have watched over them with tender care and love, but not uncared for up in heaven, where even the little birds do not escape notice. All unseen by them, there was

bending down over those sleeping children an Eye which never slumbers nor sleeps; and even now, when they thought themselves friendless in the wide world, their Father in heaven did not forget them, but was guiding their feet into the way of peace, and disposing the hearts of His servants to receive in His name and for His sake these forlorn and weary outcasts, the little ones for whom Jesus died, and whom He is ever ready to "receive favourably and to embrace with the arms of His mercy."

As Mr. Morley was putting up his shutters that night, and seeing that all was safe in the shop, he caught his foot, and stumbled over some plates which had been piled on the floor; and on bringing a candle to discover what mischief had been caused, he caught sight of what seemed to him a bundle of rags heaped together under a shelf. Great was the good man's astonishment, on a closer inspection, to discover

beneath the rags the forms of the sleeping children. Hastily calling his wife, and carefully shading the light with his hand, he stooped down and examined their faces. Traces of tears could easily be seen on the cheeks of the elder, who appeared to be about eleven years of age, and the most hasty glance at either could not have failed to discover many unmistakeable signs of want, hunger, and poverty.

Touched with tender pity for the forlorn little ones, Mr. and Mrs. Morley consulted together as to what they should do for them. "Surely the Lord Himself has brought them within the shelter of our roof; and it's a mercy to think they reached it in safety, for with the wind and snow driving as they are, there's no telling whether the poor little creatures would have lived to see the light of another day." Then, hurrying upstairs, the kind-hearted woman speedily returned with a warm blanket from her own bed, and wrapped it

carefully round the little sleepers, discoursing to herself the while.

"Certainly they might have slept in the attic, up at the top; but then there's the fear lest they might have felt frightened like at finding themselves in a strange bed, or at being woke of a sudden—no, John's right; John always knows best. Well, thank the Lord for keeping the poor babes from perishing on a night like this; and thank Him too for giving us, just now, when our hearts are sorely yearning after our own little one in the heavenly fold, something to do for His lambs still in a world of sin and sorrow."

A tear stood in the good woman's eye as she spoke. Only a few months back she had known what it was to part with the little child that had twined itself round her mother's heart in no ordinary way—loving little Lily; so sweet and gentle, with such endearing ways, and taken after an illness of only a few days, leaving a

sore blank behind. The tender mother's heart seemed to open at once to the little friendless ones whom God had led to her door; and she lay awake long that night, planning how to do the best for them, should it prove, as she felt in her own mind persuaded, that they were homeless and destitute.

Surely that night, over the homely dwelling, a heavenly smile was resting, even the blessing of Him who has said in His own holy Book: "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

CHAPTER II.

"It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

WITH her mind full of concern and kind thoughts for the poor little strangers, Mrs. Morley rose early the next morning, and hastily dressing, went down before rousing her own children, to see whether they were still sleeping. To her great astonishment, on opening the door of the shop, and unfastening the shutters, they were nowhere to be found. In the corner lay the blanket she had so carefully wrapped round them the night before, but no trace of the children could be seen. On examining the bolt of the front door, she saw that it had been slipped back, and that they must evidently have gone out before it was light, probably fearing to encounter the cross words, or even blows,

which had hitherto repulsed them from door after door where they had sought shelter.

Good Mrs. Morley blamed herself greatly for not having carried them upstairs to the attic; and both she and her husband were sorely grieved to think of the poor children wandering perhaps without food, shelter, or friend. "We'll leave the door unlatched again to-night, and maybe they'll come back to the place where they once found shelter and warmth. Poor things! it's a wonder they didn't take the blanket, with only those few thin rags scarcely covering them. I had been looking out some of our Lily's things for them: it cost me something to go to that drawer this morning, and take them out one by one; but a verse came into my mind, which helped me to give them up: 'Neither will I offer unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing;' and then it seemed quite easy to take my darling's

things and give them to Him who has said, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me.' And so now, whether these little ones come again to us or not, my mind is made up, and Lily's things shall be given to some of the needy ones whom the Good Shepherd is going out to seek in the wilderness, and bring back to His heavenly fold."

When breakfast was over, Mr. Morley called his children; and after reading a chapter with them as usual, and asking for a heavenly blessing on each, before they set off for school or work, he told them of the little wanderers who had found a shelter under their roof the night before, and asked them to pray each night and morning that God their Father would fetch home these poor children to His blessed fold on earth, and give them a place in His heavenly kingdom.

The children all listened with much

interest to their father's account. Susie, the eldest girl, was a pupil-teacher in the school where her younger sister and brother went, and on Sunday afternoons took a class in a ragged-school not far distant; and she had learned to feel a tender love for the poor little ones for whom the Lord Jesus died, but who, until they came to the school, had heard but little of a Saviour's love.

Elsie, the second girl, had left school, and helped her mother at home and in the shop; Alice and Johnny went every day to school under Susie's care; and Daisy, the third girl, was an invalid. Crippled in body by a fall when quite young, but not in mind nor heart nor understanding, Daisy, whose weak and feeble frame had long since ceased to grow, grew in grace and heavenly wisdom year by year. In her quiet corner by the fireside, or oftener lying on the little couch, to which she was sometimes kept for weeks together, her

sweet and peaceful face was a constant lesson to the busy ones around her, and all who knew her, old and young, would tell how the heavenly-minded child had often helped and cheered them on their way. Daisy would knit socks and comforters for Susie's ragged children; and though she could not go out to teach them of the loving Saviour, as her sister did, she could speak to Him for them, and many a silent prayer went up for them from Daisy's heart into the ears of Him who so tenderly listens to the voices of little children:

"For He loves His little children,
And He pleadeth for them there,
Asking the great God of heaven
That their sins may be forgiven;
And He hears the prayer."

When Susan came home from her class on Sunday afternoons, Daisy was always full of eager questions about the children, and would lie with her large eyes fixed

on her sister, as she told of the poor little ones whom she was trying to teach about Jesus.

Susie had gentle ways, and loved her little sister dearly, and devoted much of her spare time to her; while Daisy in return unconsciously taught her elder sister many a lesson of patient submission and quiet trust. For never can the life of any one, however young, feeble, and apparently helpless, that is really united to Jesus Christ by living faith, be spent in vain. "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life;" and whether that fruit be manifested in active service or in patient suffering, it shall not be in vain in the Lord. After all, it is not so much our work as our will that God asks and desires of us—the offering up of ourselves as a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice; and the little child that day by day looks up to heaven, and tries from love to Jesus to be gentle, loving, and obedient, or to

bear with quiet patience the weary pain which keeps it still and lonely when other children are at their merry pastimes, does not live in vain, but is bringing forth the fruit of righteousness, to the praise and glory of God.

Weeks and months went by; but no more was seen or heard of the little strangers, though night after night the Morleys' door was left unlatched, in the hope of their return; and every day when the children gathered round the hearth the father ended his petitions with an earnest prayer that the little lost ones might one day be found, either on earth or in heaven.

Daisy's confidence that God would hear, and that some day they would be brought back, was unshaken, though day after day passed by without bringing anything further to light about them. "Our prayer-children," she would call them; and perhaps few little beggar children ever had so many loving

thoughts bestowed on them, so many sweet prayers breathed upwards into the ears of the Lord of heaven and earth, prayers that were not spoken in vain, but which were even now preparing a harvest of blessing.

CHAPTER III.

"Rejoice with Me, for I have found My sheep which was lost."

It was a bright Sunday in July, and the bells of some of the neighbouring churches were ringing for afternoon service, as Susan Morley, after leaving her little brother and sister at the door of their school, made her way through some narrow bye-streets to the little ragged-school that was so dear to her heart, and from which on Sunday afternoons for the last four years nothing had ever kept her absent.

It was a rough-looking place, which had formerly been used as a coal-shed; but loving hands had hung the walls with sweet texts and pictures, and transformed it into a pleasant-looking place within; while the humble appearance of its exterior had this advantage, that it attracted, while a grander

building would have frightened away, the very class of children it was so desirable to get hold of.

A stranger going in that afternoon, as he looked round on the clean faces of the children, and marked their generally tidy appearance, and quiet orderly behaviour, might have questioned the fact of its being a *ragged* school. Very different was the appearance of the children who attended it ten years previously, when it was first opened through the loving thoughts and efforts of some kind friends who had laboured earnestly in behalf of the lost little ones; and very different was the neighbourhood generally then, from what it now was. Through those years of patient toil and prayer the earnest workers had seen, at first perhaps only dimly, here and there tokens for good to bid them not be weary in well-doing; but now, in looking back, they could feel how the good hand of their God had indeed been upon

them, and multiplied the seed sown a hundredfold. To homes once sunk in darkness and ignorance had the blessed light been carried, and little children, taught of Jesus, had borne home to their parents the glad tidings of great joy, and taught the lips which first taught them to speak the words of eternal life. Thus had the wilderness been turned into a fruitful field; and in the day of the harvest those patient sowers shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.

As Susan opened the door of the school, a group of children followed her in; and on taking her place in the class, a little girl stepped forward, and curtseying, said: "Please, teacher, you told us last Sunday that we were to try and say 'come' to somebody else, and on the way here I saw two little girls standing at the corner of our street, and I asked them if they wouldn't like to come to school with me, and hear

what teacher would tell us about Jesus, and they said they'd like to come, only they'd got such ragged things, they didn't like to come in, because, perhaps, the ladies would be angry, and send them away; but I said you didn't mind how ragged we were, if only we came. But when they got near the school they looked frightened, and said they couldn't come, unless so be I asked leave for them. Oh! can I fetch them in, teacher? I said I was sure you'd say 'Yes.'"

The eager request was soon granted; and before many minutes the child returned, leading, one on either side of her, the poor children for whom she had pleaded. They were indeed ragged, and the sad, pinched look on both faces told of the privations they must have suffered. Susan spoke to them very kindly, and, gradually reassured by her gentle voice and manner, they gained confidence, and ventured to look round them. When prayers were over, and

the other children had said their texts and hymns, Susan turned to the little strangers and asked them a few simple questions; amongst others, whether they had ever

heard of heaven? The elder of the two looked at her thoughtfully for a moment, and then said, "Isn't that the place where nobody wants nothing to eat or drink?"

Deeply touched by an answer which told so much, in a few short words, of the suffering and want with which they were evidently so early familiarised, but unwilling to show what she felt, Susan answered: "Quite right, dear; heaven is a place where nobody wants for anything; every one there is quite happy. But can you tell me how we may get there?"

No responsive word or look came this time from either of the little new-comers; but amongst Susan's own children many a hand was held out, and when she made a sign to one of them to answer, a little girl named Jane Hardy said, "Please, teacher, for Jesus Christ's sake."

"Quite right, dear; but now tell me what you mean when you say, 'for Jesus Christ's sake.'"

"Please, teacher, because Jesus came down from heaven to die for our sins; and if our sins are forgiven for His sake, and our naughty hearts changed by His Holy

Spirit, we shall go to heaven when we die."

"That's right, dear; it is only because of our Saviour Christ's great love in leaving His home above, and coming down to our earth to live and die for us, that we can have any sure and certain hope of ever reaching heaven. You know the little verse which says—

'And this, not for any good thing we have done,
But all for the sake of His well-beloved Son.'

And now tell me if Jesus is willing to receive little children into His beautiful home."

Several hands were held out, and almost with one voice the children answered: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Susan then told the children to turn to their Bibles; and, after reading with them the parable of the lost sheep, she told

them as simply as possible, how Jesus is the Good Shepherd who goes out after the lost sheep, and never rests until He has found them; how by the "lost sheep" are meant those who have not known His love in dying for them; how tenderly He loves little children, and longs for them to come into His fold. She explained to them how weak and unable to protect themselves the sheep are; and just so, how feeble and helpless we all are in ourselves, and what need we have to be led and kept day by day in the right way. She spoke to them of the tender love of the Good Shepherd for every one, even the least and feeblest of His lambs; of their great enemy, the devil, from whom He died to deliver them: how He knows each little one by name, keeps His eye always upon them, watches over them by night and by day, goes after them when they wander from Him, and brings them back to His fold; and, at length, when life is over, receives them into His

own gloriously bright and holy kingdom above.

The children all listened quietly and attentively; and amongst the little eyes fixed on the kind young teacher, none seemed more riveted than the poor little stranger-children, by whom alone of all the class the sweet story of old—the story which is ever new—was heard for the first time.

When school was over, the children stood up and sang together the sweet hymn, which followed so well on the subject of the lesson:

"Jesus is our Shepherd,
Wiping every tear,
Folded in His bosom,
What have we to fear?"

When the class was dismissed, Susan called the little strangers to her, and asked them their names, and where they lived, and if they would like to come to the school again. The elder one answered:

"I'm called Polly, and that's Lizzie. We don't live nowhere. This is a rare nice place; we'd like to come again."

"And have you no father or mother?"

"Please, 'm, mother's dead, and father went away to sea long ago, and we've nobody to look after us."

"And where are you going now?"

"We shall walk about till it's dark, and then creep under one of the arches, or on to a door-step, if nobody don't turn us away; but most often we get turned away from one house after another, or the police sees us, and then we has to hide away as fast as we can. It's not as bad now as in the winter. Lizzie gets a cough then; and I don't know how to keep her warm; we often shiver all night long. Arches is draughty; but sometimes we find an old barrel, and creep into that; that's the best place."

"Not quite the best," said the younger child; "we once slept in a warm place."

The elder child here shook her head at poor little Lizzie, and made a sign to her to say no more; but the movement did not escape Susan's observation, and only served to confirm what she had already strongly suspected, that these poor, forlorn children were none other than Daisy's "prayer-children." It had been her earnest hope that somehow, through means of the ragged-school, which brought her into contact with so many of the poor children and homes of the neighbourhood, she might learn something about them; and now the longings and prayers of the past months seemed at length about to be answered. Their eyes brightened when Susan asked them if they would like to go home with her, and to have some warm tea and bread and butter; and poor little Lizzie could not resist saying, "We're so hungry; we've had nothing but some dry crusts since yesterday morning."

Telling them to keep close to her, and

talking to them, as they walked along, of the Good Shepherd who loved them, and was even now seeking to bring them to His fold, Susan led them to her own home. The shutters being closed, the children did not at first recognize the place where six months before they had found shelter ; but as Susan led them through the shop, watching their faces meanwhile, to discover any sign of recognition, Lizzie suddenly pulled her sister's arm, and said in a low voice, "Wasn't this the place where we slept that night ?"

Polly looked frightened, and whispered, "Perhaps we shall be punished for it;" and in another moment both of them would have darted out of the door, had not Susan closed it and taken them by the hand, saying to them very gently, "Don't be afraid, dear children ; this is the nice place where you once slept, one cold night in the winter, and we hoped you would have come to it again, and used to leave the

door unlatched for you every night. God your Father in heaven led you here, and we asked Him to bring you back, and He has heard our prayers. Polly and Lizzie needn't fear anything now; for, if they are good, they shall stay here always, and never sleep out in the cold any more again."

Then leading them into the inner room, she brought them to Daisy, who was lying on her couch in the window, and said:

"Daisy, here are your 'prayer-children,' found at last through your prayers and my dear little school."

Daisy's face beamed with joy and thankfulness. During the quiet hour while her brother and sisters were at school, and her father and mother at church, she had been praying that Jesus would suffer these little children to come unto Him, and that they might be found; and even while the prayer was rising up from her heart the answer of peace was coming down, and the promise

of old being fulfilled: "It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

There was general rejoicing that afternoon in the Morleys' home when the rest of the family came in.

Kind Mrs. Morley, with Elsie's help, soon washed and dressed the poor children in some better garments than their own miserable rags; and the loving mother's heart did not repent when she saw poor little Lizzie sitting at the tea-table that evening in Lily's place, and clad in Lily's clothes.

Happy, thrice happy, they who know the joy and blessed privilege of ministering to the Lord of glory, in the person even of a little child, and who, from love to the Saviour who loved them and gave Himself for them, receive one such little one in His name.

CHAPTER IV.

"Jesus called a little child unto Him."

WHEN school hours were over on week days, Susan Morley used often to visit the homes of her Sunday scholars; and one afternoon, about a year after the events recorded in the last chapter, she set out for this purpose, with the wish too of seeing one who had been absent from the class the day before. It was another poor child who had been brought into the school by the same little Jane, whose earnest efforts to say "Come" to others had led to the rescuing of Daisy's "prayer-children."

For some time the child had come regularly to the class; but when Jane called for her as usual one Sunday afternoon, she found her in tears, and on in-

quiring the cause, the child told her that her mother had said she should never go to the school again. Jane had tried to comfort her, by promising to ask her teacher to come and see her, and did not fail to lay the case before Susan as soon as school was over. Susan had already made some inquiries respecting the child's home, and was much afraid, from what she had heard, that it would not be an easy matter to persuade the mother to send her. However, seeking help and guidance where none ever seek in vain, she set out the following afternoon to see what could be done, and to try if possible to soften the hard heart of poor little Bessie's stepmother, and induce her to retract her threat.

Turning down some narrow streets, she made her way into the close, dingy-looking alley, in a court of which was Bessie's home. Groups of dirty children were playing about in the gutters; and women with untidy hair, lounging at their doors,

stared at her as she passed; but, quietly looking upwards, she made her way through the midst of them without annoyance, and at last reached the door of the miserable house, in a garret of which little Jane had told her Bessie would be found.

The staircase was narrow and steep, with scant glimmer of light; and the sound of rude voices in some of the rooms, as she made her way with difficulty up the broken stairs, did not tend to reassure her. At last she reached the top; but, to her surprise, whilst pausing for a moment before knocking at the door, she heard a little voice inside singing. It was the old familiar hymn, sung almost every Sunday at the school, "There is a happy land, far, far away;" and the little singer seemed so to enjoy the words, and to sing them with such heart, that Susan did not like to interrupt her, but waited till she had finished before knocking at the door for admittance.

When she did so, no one said, "Come in;" and she was obliged to repeat her knock, this time saying as she did so, "Bessie, dear, are you at home? I've come to see you."

The door was not opened, but a voice from within answered, "Oh, please, teacher, I'm so sorry I can't open the door; but mother's locked me in, and taken the key, for fear I should run out and leave the babies. I've got to take care of them till she comes home."

"Very well, dear, never mind about the door; but tell me why you did not come yesterday to school. I was so sorry not to have you in the class."

The child did not answer at once, and Susan almost reproached herself for having asked the question, for she fancied she heard the sound of a stifled sob, and then the child said in broken tones:

"I like to come to the school, but I mustn't come again. Mother says she won't

have me go there, and she'll beat me if I do; but I want so to hear some more about Jesus, and I'm trying to speak to Him, as you told us."

"That's right, dear; and do you think if I were to teach you a little prayer to say to Him, you would say it every night and morning, and whenever else you are able through the day?"

"Oh, yes, teacher, that I would."

"Well, then, dear, I want you to say after me: 'O God, give me Thy Holy Spirit, and take away all my sins, for Jesus Christ's sake.'"

The child repeated the words after Susan several times, until she thought she could remember them. Then Susan spoke to her as well as she could through the closed door about the loving Saviour, who died for little children, and who would wash away her sins, if she asked Him, in His precious blood, and give His Holy Spirit to teach and guide her in the right way,

and at last, through His own great love, bring her to the happy land she had been singing about. Then taking a little card with a text on it out of her pocket, she slipped it under the door, and told Bessie to try and learn it by the next time she came, and promised if she knew it perfectly she should have another.

Bessie read the words on it, "I love them that love Me, and those that seek Me early shall find Me;" and then Susan said:

"Do you know who it is that says this, dear Bessie?"

"It doesn't tell us, teacher; but I should think it must be Jesus, because you said He loves us."

"And do you love Jesus, Bessie?"

"Oh yes, teacher, I do love Him."

"Why do you love Him, dear?"

"Oh, teacher, because He died to save us from going to the dreadful place, and because He's so good to us."

"And do you know, dear, what the verse means when it says, 'Those that seek Me *early* shall find Me'?"

"Early in the morning, teacher, before we think of anything else."

"Yes, dear, we should think of Him as soon as we wake in the morning; our first thought should be of Him and His love; but it means something beside this—that while you are young, quite in the morning of life, you should seek Him as your Saviour and Friend, not wait till you are grown up, because you may never live till then, and the sweet promise is for children, 'Those that seek Me *early* shall find Me.' I hope little Bessie is beginning to seek Jesus early."

"Yes, teacher; and I hope I shall see Him some day. I often lie awake at night; and through the chinks in the roof I sometimes see the stars, and they look so bright, and I know Jesus made them, and I say to myself, 'Jesus's home is brighter even

than those stars; and maybe some day I shall get there, if my sins are washed away, and my naughty heart is made clean.' And when the babies are cross, and my arm aches with nursing them, I sing my hymns and verses, and I forget I'm tired, and I feel so happy; but I do want to come to school again."

Susan promised the child to see if she could persuade her mother to give her leave to return to the class; but bidding her, whether or not, to try to be gentle, obedient, and patient, and thus to show her love to the Lord Jesus, who had loved her with so great a love, she said good-bye to her, and made her way once more down the rickety staircase.

As she went down, she heard the little voice upstairs beginning to sing again the old favourite hymn; and with feelings of deep thankfulness she thought to herself, "Truly, of such is the kingdom of heaven;" so simply had this little child received the

message of Christ's love into her heart, and as a little palm-tree flourishing in the midst of a desert land, because its roots are watered by a hidden spring, was bringing forth in an ungodly home, and with every outward disadvantage, the fruit of holiness, to the glory and praise of God.

Susan made many efforts to see little Bessie's stepmother, but without success. She went out to work early in the morning, and purposely avoided seeing her at other times. When Susan called at the house, little Bessie, if not out, was always locked into the room. But the child had many happy talks with her kind teacher through the closed door; and though not allowed to come back to the school, she learned, week after week, the verses which Susan slipped for her under the door, and was treasuring up in her heart a store of precious texts which no one could take away from her. After some time Susan managed to send her a Bible by little Jane, and the joy of

the child at having one of her own was unbounded.

"I can now read all about Jesus, and perhaps some day mother will let me read it to her."

One evening, a few months later on, as Susan was sitting after tea by Daisy's couch, reading to her, the shop-bell rang, and on going to answer it Elsie found little Jane waiting with a pale face, and tears in her eyes. She had been running fast, and was so out of breath she could not speak for a minute, but at last managed to get out that Susan was wanted directly. Bessie's mother had sent her—there had been an accident, and Bessie was hurt, and had been taken to the hospital, and was asking for "teacher."

Susan was ready in a moment, and before long reached the hospital, little Jane going with her as far as the entrance, and telling her the few particulars she had gathered from Bessie's stepmother about what had

happened. It appeared that the child had been sent out early in the morning with some violets to sell; but not finding as many customers as usual, and fearing her stepmother's anger if she returned without selling them, she had lingered about the streets till dusk. Jane had met her, and tried to persuade her to come home; but she said, "Oh no! not till I have sold my flowers; mother will be so vexed if I don't!"

When Jane asked her if she were not very tired and hungry, she said she was tired, and she had a pain in her side, but she was saying over her verses and hymns, and this helped her to forget how tired she was.

As Jane left her she heard her saying to herself, "He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom"—the last verse Susan had given her to learn. She had not been at home much more than an hour, when Bessie's stepmother ran in,

and told her to fetch Miss Morley at once —that Bessie had been run over by a waggon, and had been taken to the hospital.

Susan hurried upstairs to the ward where the poor child had been carried; the doctor and nurse were standing on one side of the bed as she entered, and, from the grave look on the face of the former, she guessed what was indeed the case, that little or no hope was entertained of the child's recovery. Both her legs had been broken, and her head severely injured as well. Her stepmother was sitting at the foot of the bed, and seemed half stupefied. Susan stepped forward quietly, and bending down over the poor little sufferer, said in a gentle voice, "He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom."

The little eyes, which had been closed until now, opened for a moment with returning consciousness, and the child

smiled as the familiar words fell on her ear, and held out her hand to Susan. Then, looking up with a bright smile, she whispered, "I'm so happy. Tell mother I'm going to Jesus; and I hope she'll come too." She made an effort to say, "He shall gather the lambs with His arm;" and then with one little sigh, turning her head on the pillow, as if going to sleep, she was gently gathered into the fold of the Good Shepherd above.

Dear little Bessie! No more rough words or blows, no more pain and hunger, no more tears, "the waves of this troublesome world" safely crossed, and the little ship at anchor in the fair haven, where they who enter in "shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

CHAPTER V.

"He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still."

ABOUT two years after little Bessie's death, Daisy, whose health had been failing very much during the summer months, was ordered to go away for some time to a drier and milder place; and as Mrs. Morley had a sister, the wife of a farmer, living at a little village on the south coast, it was arranged that she should spend the winter with her.

Little Lizzie was to go too, partly as a companion for Daisy, and also because she was far from strong herself; for though in better health than when she and her sister were received into the Morleys' home, she had never thoroughly recovered from the effects of early neglect and exposure to all weathers. She and Polly had continued

to go to the little school which had been the means, through God's blessing, of rescuing them from their life of misery. Their love and gratitude to the kind friends who had taken them into their home had from the first been most touching, and amply repaid Mr. Morley and his wife for the disinterested kindness and tender pity with which they had received into their home, and treated as their own children, the friendless little ones, who had no other claim upon them than their misery and wretchedness.

There were many regrets in the Morleys' home when the time came for Daisy and Lizzie to set off on their long journey; for all knew how sadly Daisy would be missed from her accustomed corner, and little Lizzie was a general favourite. Mr. Morley went with them the greater part of the way, and saw them safely into the coach which was to carry them the last twenty miles.

Daisy bore the journey better than could have been expected; and both Lizzie and she met with a kindly welcome from the good old farmer and his wife, who had no children of their own, and were well pleased at the thought of having some young faces about them. The old-fashioned farmhouse, nestling down in a sheltered nook, with the hills rising behind it, was the picture of comfort and peace both within and without.

Early the next morning, as they looked out from the windows of the snug sitting-room, the quiet beauty of the scene which lay before them filled both the children with wonder and delight. The farm stood at the head of a valley well wooded with fir-trees, and opening down on to the bay; a little stream ran gurgling down its rocky bed only a few yards from the garden gate, while the cliff itself, down which a winding path led to the shore, was covered with creepers and ivy, and rich in every kind of

foliage. The trees were still in the beauty of their autumn tints, and to Daisy, whose eyes never saw a tree from one year's end to another, it seemed a perfect paradise.

But the crowning delight to both the children was the wide sea, which bounded the view, and which stretched away to right and left, as far as eye could reach. As they looked out on it for the first time in their lives, it seemed to them more wondrous and beautiful than anything they had ever imagined. Here and there in the far distance they could see the sails of some ships bound for a far-off land, the rising sun just tipping them with gold; or nearer home, down in the bay below, the little fishing-boats returning home after the night's toil. They were never tired of gazing on the sea with its ever-changing beauty, and the kind-hearted old farmer would often drive the children in his gig down to the shore, and leave them there with their books and work for hours to-

gether. Mrs. Morris contrived an easy folding couch for Daisy, which was carried down without trouble, and on which she

was able to rest, and enjoy the view without fatigue.

The soft, mild air, with the invigorating sea-breezes, soon brought returning strength to her and little Lizzie, and the quiet

peaceful life in the old farmhouse was a time of rest and enjoyment long remembered by them both. The bright mornings were generally spent on the shore; and in the afternoon, while Daisy rested in the pleasant bay-window of the parlour, little Lizzie often went with Mrs. Morris on some mission of love to one or other of the fishermen's or farm-labourers' cottages scattered over the valley.

Sometimes, as a great treat, the child was allowed to go by herself, to carry a basket of eggs or a pat of home-made butter, with some tea and sugar, to an aged man and his wife, formerly employed on the farm, but who were now past work, and lived in a lonely cottage half-way down the cliff. The little girl was always welcome to the good old couple, and many a happy half-hour she spent with them, sometimes reading to them as they sat in the chimney-corner out of the large Bible, which always lay open on the table;

sometimes sitting on a little stool at their feet, and listening to them as they talked of the days long gone by, when children's feet had trodden their cottage-floor, and another little girl had occupied the same stool Lizzie was sitting on. Sometimes they would go over the old story, and tell her how, one by one, all those children had been taken from them, in infancy or early childhood, and had been laid side by side to rest, in a quiet corner of the little churchyard under the hill; but how they knew and rejoiced to think that all were safely gathered into the blessed home to which day by day they were drawing nearer themselves.

One day, when the wind was rising and the sea very rough, the old man told Lizzie to watch the fishing-boats coming into the bay, and then said:

"You see those little storm-tossed boats, my lassie, making for the harbour; they've had a rough time of it, and I'll venture to

say, there isn't a man in them who won't be glad to set his foot on shore. It's a rocky coast this, and many's the brave ship I've known in my time wrecked off the rocks yonder, let alone the little cockle-shells of fishing-boats. Ah, my child, it's just a picture of our life. We're all launched on a stormy sea; and, though some have a smoother passage than others, I believe there are waves and storms for all. Happy for those that have with them in the ship the one Pilot that can bring them safely through all storms, into the quiet haven."

The child looked up earnestly into the man's face as he spoke, and then said: "Daisy says she thinks the haven must be all the more welcome when the boats have had a rough passage."

"Ay, and Daisy's right too, my child; the storms and danger make the rest and peaceful shelter seem all the sweeter; and heaven will seem all the more welcome when the voyage has been full of storms.'

The old man murmured softly to himself, "Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven."

The wind now began suddenly to increase in violence; and fearing to detain the child any longer, the old man desired her to hurry home at once, going with her himself to the top of the zigzag path which led up the cliff, and watching till he saw her little form disappear through the gate leading to the farm.

CHAPTER VI.

"He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind . . . their soul is melted because of trouble."

THAT night the storm raged with terrible fury, and many were the anxious hearts in the valley, many the eyes that saw no sleep, but watched and prayed till morning light, "for those in peril on the sea."

Daisy and her little companion lay awake all night listening to the waves lashing up against the shore, and to the hurricane which swept round the farmhouse. At times it seemed to them as if the house itself swayed to and fro, and they clung tremblingly to one another; but the old dwelling was built high up on the rock, and was protected by the hill behind, and when the light of day broke over it, it stood secure.

Farmer Morris was up before dawn, and calling his men together, assembled them for prayer in the old kitchen; and then telling them to lose no time in following him to the shore, he made his way down to the bay as speedily as possible. A sad sight greeted him there, a fine ship lying on her beam-ends, about a hundred yards from the shore, utterly dismasted, and going to pieces as fast as possible. Some groups of fishermen were busily engaged in trying to rescue portions of the cargo, which were being continually washed up on the shore; while others with their wives were intent on ministering to the half-drowned crew, all of whom by aid of the lifeboat had been rescued from a watery grave.

Mrs. Morris was not long in following her husband to the shore. She was well known in the fishermen's huts, and was at all times a welcome visitor, for all knew that in trouble or trial of whatever kind,

they had only to turn to the old farm under the shadow of the hill, and be sure of ready help and sympathy. As she stepped out of one of the cottages, a poor woman, the

wife of one of the fishermen, came out of another close by, and said :

" Maybe you'll be so good as to step into our house next, mistress. There's a

poor man, one of the crew that was saved last night, but I doubt he's bound for a better shore; he was longer coming to than any of the others, and it seems, from what some of them say, he's been ill a long time."

Mrs. Morris went with her at once into the cottage, and on opening the door of the inner room stepped softly to the poor man's bedside, and sat down by him. He was asleep; but one glance at his thin face and emaciated hands told only too plainly that the woman's words were true, and that he was, as she expressed it, soon bound for a better shore.

After some time he awoke; and on seeing Mrs. Morris, he asked her if she would be so good as to read to him, pointing to a little well-worn Bible which lay on his pillow. Mrs. Morris turned to the thirty-second Psalm; and when she had finished reading it, and had spoken to him of Jesus as the sure refuge and only hiding-

place for poor sinners, he looked up at her earnestly, and said :

" Blessed be God, I have found that refuge, through His grace and goodness, for never did any poor sinner have greater need of such a refuge and such a hiding-place."

He spoke with difficulty, and the effort to say this seemed almost too much for him, for he sank back exhausted. Mrs. Morris did not press him to talk any more ; but with a few soothing words, and an earnest prayer that Jesus would light for him the dark valley, the shadows of which were now gathering around him, she took leave of the poor man, desiring the woman in whose cottage he was to see that he wanted for nothing, and promising to return later in the day.

The other sufferers occupied much of her time and care ; and it was not until late in the afternoon that she was able to see the poor dying sailor again. She

found on reaching the cottage that he had rallied a little since the morning, and was able to talk with much less difficulty. As she sat down by him he looked up with an earnest expression, and said, "I want you to tell me once again the glad news that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. I have heard it again and again, but I am never tired of hearing the same sweet sound.

"The voice that first told me of my need of a Saviour, that first bid me look to Jesus, is silent now. It was a young cabin-boy on board the ship I first sailed in from England. We had a rough voyage, and out in the Atlantic met with such a storm as made my coward heart quail. I remembered how, in days gone by, as a little child my mother had taught me of God, and told me I need not fear in the dark because He would be near and take care of me; but now this thought did not quiet my heart. I felt that God was

near, and that it was His voice speaking in the storm; but I could not look up to Him as a friend, and the thought of His being near only made me tremble with fear. I had lived so long in sin and without God in the world, that surely He would not listen to me now, or take care of me in the storm. All my past life seemed in a moment to stand out before me, and the thought of what a dark picture it was filled me well-nigh with despair. As I heard the wind and the waves roaring, and looked out into the thick darkness, I felt there was not a glimmer of hope for me. Just then this young cabin-boy, who had often spoken to me of the Saviour, but whom I and another man on board had never lost an opportunity of jeering at, came past me. He had been with a message from the captain to the mate; and as he passed me in the dark, I thought I caught sound of the words, 'I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.' At any

other time I should probably have laughed at him; but I was in no mood for jesting now; and something forced me to call out, as he went by, 'Aren't you afeared, Charlie?' for I was trembling myself from head to foot. The boy stopped and said, 'No, master, I'm not afeared. When the storm in the heart's once been stilled, the outside storms can't alarm one; if one's heart is only in the harbour, there's no room for fear.

> Amid the howling wintry sea
> We are in port if we have Thee.'

"Ah, mistress, I would have given the world at that moment to have felt as that young lad did; though many a time when he had spoken to me before of the sure haven for storm-tossed souls, I had laughed at him, and told him there would be time enough to seek the harbour when the storm came, that we didn't want it in smooth sailing. Ah, how well I recollect

the sad look which came over his face when I spoke so, and how gravely he would say, 'Ah, Master Smith, you should put into that port in bright weather, if you'd know how to find it in the storm.'

"He had hardly passed by when a tremendous wave broke over the ship, and it was hard work for the men to stand at the pumps.

"In the roar of the wind and sea I heard the young boy's voice: 'Call upon God, Master Smith, call upon God! He says, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee."' And then and there in the darkest night I have ever spent in my life, and yet not quite the darkest, for before it had ended a gleam of light had shone across my heart, I did call on God, as I clung for my life to the side of the ship, and prayed Him to have mercy on my poor benighted soul, as I had never before prayed in my life. But the lad's voice I have never heard again; the wave

that washed over the ship had borne away with it the soul that was the most ready of all on board to meet its God. Those words, 'Call upon God, Master Smith, call upon God!' must have been well-nigh his last on earth. The storm that was my call to the Saviour was his to go home; and surely never was anyone so young more ready for the summons. I never knew a lad so fearless in danger, so ready to witness for the Lord, so little afeared of man. There wasn't a man on board that didn't in his heart respect him, even if he didn't think with him. I found his jacket the next morning; he had taken it off, to be more ready to help the men at the pumps, and there in the pocket was the little Bible I had so often seen him reading. I couldn't help a tear or two when I opened it, and saw how well worn and used it was.

"Here's the Bible, mistress; I have kept it ever since; and, blessed be God, through

reading that Book, I have found pardon and peace, and a hope that, poor miserable sinner as I am, I shall one day reach the home that dear lad has most surely gone to, through the love of the Saviour who came into the world to save sinners such as I. That Book has been my constant companion ever since by night and by day; and, thank God, it was made the means of salvation to another man besides myself, the very one who used to join with me in jeering poor Charlie Green; he died in peace through reading this blessed Book. He too, like me, had lived in sin and in forgetfulness of God, and when he fell ill he was afraid of the thought of death. I used to read to him; I had found peace then myself, and I couldn't do less than try to put him in the way of finding it too. I had seen the beacon light which saved my poor soul from shipwreck, and guided me into the haven of refuge, and wasn't I bound to do my utmost to point it out to

some other storm-tossed soul? He told me much about his past life, how he had left his poor dying wife and children, and knew nothing of what had become of them; and he made me promise, before he died, that if ever I came back to England, I would try to find out where they were, and tell them how he repented of his past life, and had come as a poor sinner to seek forgiveness at the feet of Jesus. He used often to say he knew that he was the chief of sinners, but that in this blessed Book he had found that there was hope, even for the vilest that came and touched the hem of the Saviour's garment; and sure enough he found peace in looking to 'the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.'

"He often spoke of his two children, and said he prayed that God would teach them to know a Saviour's love; and that although their earthly father had forsaken them, the Lord Himself would take them up. I should like to have done what

I could to find out something about them and their mother; but now I fear I shan't be able. I know I haven't long to live, and my voyage is almost over. I hardly thought I should have lived through last night. I had no strength to stir hand or foot myself, and if they hadn't lifted me into the boat I must have been drowned, for the ship was filling fast; but, oh, how different I felt from what I did in the last storm! Now I could say to myself a verse I had many a time heard poor Charlie sing when the wind was against us, and the sea rough:

'One who has known in storms to sail
I have on board;
Above the raging of the gale
I hear my Lord.'

Ah, mistress, it's one thing to have to face the storm alone, but quite another to meet it with Christ. I could now understand what Charlie meant when he said, 'The inner storm was stilled, and so the outside

storms couldn't alarm him.' One had come by and said unto my soul, all tossed with sin and misery, 'Peace, be still,' and now 'there was a great calm.'

'I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary and worn and sad:
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad.'"

Mrs. Morris was deeply touched and interested in the poor man's story. As she rose to go, she turned once more to look at the little Bible which had been so blessed to him and others, and on opening it her eyes caught sight of the name, "Morley," written on the fly-leaf. On examining it more closely she was still more astonished at the inscription, which was as follows:

"Given to CHARLES GREEN,
on leaving the Ragged School,
with the best wishes of his sincere friend and teacher,
SUSAN MORLEY.

'Oh satisfy us early with Thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.'"

Charles Green was an orphan boy in whom Susan Morley had taken great interest. He had attended the ragged school regularly for three years, and during the last part of the time Susan had been much encouraged about him, and had begun to hope that the good seed had taken root in his heart. Still, she had never felt quite sure that the boy had really given his heart to the Saviour, and often after he had left the school, as years passed away without her hearing of him, she had many anxious thoughts about him. Her great hope had been in the Bible which she had given him on parting, and in the promise he had made her that he would read a few verses in it every day. No day had passed since he sailed from England in which Susan Morley did not pray for the sailor boy far away on the sea, and ask that the Word of God might find an entrance into his heart, and make him "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." And how

abundantly her prayers had been answered, beyond all that she had thought or expected, we have already seen.

Nor was this all. On inquiring the name and other particulars respecting the poor man who had died in peace through reading the Bible given by Susan to Charlie Green, Mrs. Morris discovered on her next visit to Robert Smith that it could have been none other than the father of Polly and Lizzie. She took Lizzie with her several times to visit the dying sailor, and he was much interested in seeing the child of his former shipmate. Poor little Lizzie would often read to him out of the Bible her father had learned to love, and was never tired of asking questions about him, and would sometimes say :

" Polly and I used to pray to God to let us see our father again, but now we must pray to meet him in heaven."

Robert Smith did not live many weeks. He had no friends living, and seemed to

desire nothing further, now that he knew that the children of his comrade were alive and well cared for. Mrs. Morris visited him constantly, and saw that he wanted for nothing. Resting on Jesus, he passed away in peace, with the words on his lips of his favourite hymn:

> "Hide me, O, my Saviour, hide,
> Till the storm of life be past;
> Safe into the haven guide,
> Oh, receive my soul at last."

Thus already had much blessed fruit sprung from the patient labours and earnest prayers of one young teacher in a little ragged school; surely only an earnest of further and fuller blessing reserved for the day of harvest by Him who has promised that His word shall not return unto Him void, but shall accomplish that which He pleases, and prosper in the thing whereto He sends it.

CHAPTER VII.

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

It was with feelings of deep joy and thankfulness that Susan Morley heard of the events related in the last chapter. Writing back to Daisy, who had sent her the glad news, she said :

"Dear Daisy,

"We were all glad to have your last letter, and Lizzie's, and to find that you are both so much better. I need not say how thankful we all were, and especially poor Polly, at hearing the particulars of her father's happy death. Though she could not help at first sorrowing that she will never see him on earth, she feels it is indeed far better to know that he is safe in heaven, and to have the blessed hope of

meeting him there. How wonderful it was that it should have been brought about in that way, and through his reading Charlie Green's Bible—the Bible, Daisy you and I asked might be made the means of guiding some one else's feet, beside his own, into the way of peace! How thankful I am, too, that one of the dear ragged boys, and especially Charlie, whom I have thought of so constantly, and have often felt so anxious about, should have been made such a blessing, and enabled to witness for Jesus in life, and to testify in death that he feared no evil because He was with him!

"I am sure you will be glad to hear that Mrs. Grey, dear little Bessie's stepmother, is beginning to read in earnest the little Bible Bessie loved so dearly, and we must pray that she too may receive the kingdom of God as a little child. She brought the twins last week, and asked to be allowed to send them to the school where Bessie

learned the way to heaven; and the neighbours say that she is wonderfully changed, and so much more gentle than she used to be. She comes regularly to the mothers' meeting, and has been at church every Sunday evening for the last two months. She often says she is cut to the heart when she thinks of poor little Bessie's gentle ways, and how hard she used to be to her. But I tell her not to grieve too much, for 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;' and little Bessie is where the angels rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, and where the broken and contrite heart is not despised. I think God is giving her this broken heart, and perhaps little Bessie is now, with those other bright spirits, rejoicing over her.

"The dear little school is prospering; Jane Hardy is a great help, and, next to Polly, the best monitress we have. They often go to read to Mrs. Grey, and she takes kindly to them for the love they bore

to little Bessie. It is cheering to see how many dear children are gathering in; and everything, and especially the tokens for good God has given us lately so strikingly, seems to bid us 'not to be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.'

"In *due* season, Daisy; that must mean in God's own time—sooner or later—here or there; and we in the meantime must pray and hope, and patiently wait, while we work on, till God shall call us to His own rest; and then, if not before the due time, the day of harvest will come, when He says, 'they who sow and they who reap shall rejoice together.'

"Your affectionate sister,

"Susan Morley."

Dear, patient workers for Jesus in lowly vineyards such as this, faint not, neither be weary. Look up for the grace that is sufficient for all difficulties and all dis-

courageements, and look on by faith to the day when you shall see what God asks you now perhaps to take on trust, that "your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

In that day you shall find how the long years of ploughing were not lost, but were most surely preparing the way for the precious seed; how every grain you once scattered for Him, watered by your prayers, and perhaps by your tears, has been guarded and watched over by your Lord, and turned into golden sheaves, to be laid down by you in the day of harvest at His feet, saying, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name be the glory."

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